

2: Old English Verbs

Verb Classes

Strong

Form their preterites and past participles using vowel gradation:

singan, sang, sungon, sungen

Weak

Form their preterites and past participles by adding a dental suffix *d/t*:

lāran, lārde, lārdon, lāred

Anomalous/Mixed

Do not answer to these categories, or combine them.

All verb classes commonly prefix the past ptc. with *ge-*:

gesungen, gelāred

Conjugation

- ▶ **Person: first, second, third**
- ▶ Number: singular, plural
- ▶ Tense: present, preterite
- ▶ Mood: indicative, subjunctive, imperative

ic fremme	wē fremmað
þū fremest	gē fremmað
hē fremeð	hīe fremmað

Cf. early Modern English ‘I do, thou dost, he doth’.

Conjugation

- ▶ Person: first, second, third
- ▶ Number: singular, plural
- ▶ Tense: present, preterite
- ▶ Mood: indicative, subjunctive, imperative

ic fremme	wē fremmaǎ
þū fremest	gē fremmaǎ
hē fremeǎ	hīe fremmaǎ

! *Einheitsplural*: contrast *wir machen/tun, ihr macht/tut*

Tense

- ▶ OE present : MnE present, future (simple/continuous);
- ▶ OE preterite : MnE past, present perfect, past perfect (simple/continuous);
- ▶ **resolved** tenses: *habban/bēon*/modal + participle/infinitive.
(= **periphrastic** tenses)

ic fremme

ic fremede

ic hæbbe gefremed

ic hæfde gefremed

þæt wæs gefremed

hē sceal fremman

is fela tō fremmenne

Conjugation

- ▶ Person: first, second, third
- ▶ Number: singular, plural
- ▶ **Tense: present, preterite**
- ▶ Mood: indicative, subjunctive, imperative

Weak		Strong	
ic fremme	wē fremmað	ic scīne	wē scīnað
þū fremest	gē fremmað	þū scīnest	gē scīnað
hē fremedð	hīe fremmað	hē scīneð	hīe scīnað
ic fremede	wē fremedon	ic scān	wē scinon
þū fremedest	gē fremedon	þū scine	gē scinon
hē fremede	hīe fremedon	hē scān	hīe scinon

Strong Verb Gradation Patterns

<i>class</i>	<i>first</i>	<i>fronted</i>	<i>second</i>	<i>third</i>	<i>fourth</i>	<i>cf.</i>
1	scīnan		scān	scinon	scinen	write/scheinen
2	crēopan	crīepþ	crēap	crupon	cropen	freeze/frieren
3	bregdan	britt	brægd	brugdon	brogden	bind/bergen
4	beran	birþ	bær	bāron	boren	bear/gebären
5	tredan	tritt	træd	trædon	treden	tread/treten
6	faran	færst	fōr	fōron	faren	shake/fahren
7	healdan	healdeþ	hēold	hēoldon	healden	fall/halten
7	grow/hātan	hæt	hēt	hēton	hāten	heißen

Strong Verb Gradation Patterns

<i>class</i>	<i>first</i>	<i>fronted</i>	<i>second</i>	<i>third</i>	<i>fourth</i>
1	ī		ā	i	i
2	ēo	īe	ēa	u	o
3	eCC	iCC	æCC	uCC	oCC
4	e	i	æ	ǣ	o
5	e	i	æ	ǣ	e
6	a	æ	ō	ō	a
7	X	X-fronted	Y	Y	X

Conjugation

- ▶ Person: first, second, third
- ▶ Number: singular, plural
- ▶ Tense: present, preterite
- ▶ **Mood: indicative, subjunctive, imperative**

Hēo fremep þæt

Ic wille, þæt hēo fremme þæt (cf. ‘that she do that’)

Ic wille, þæt wē fremmen þæt

Ic wolde, þæt hēo fremede þæt

Ic wolde, þæt wē fremeden þæt

Freme þæt!

Fremmap þæt!

→ See subjunctive handout

Voice

No *inflectional* passive. Passivity is expressed:

- ▶ Through *bēon* or *weorðan* + past participle:

Hē wearð ācenned

Se cāsere wæs ofslagen

- ▶ Through impersonal *man* with an active verb:

Man brohte his hēafod on ānum disce

Man gehalgode twēgen biscopas

Only the verb *hātan* can be used as a true passive verb:

Saga hwæt ic hātte

(Cf. *Sum consul Boetius wæs hāten*, formed with *bēon*.)

Anomalous Verbs

<i>bēon, wesan “to be”</i>							
<i>present indicative</i>				<i>present subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ic eom/bēo	<i>1pl</i>	wē sindon/bēoþ	<i>1sg</i>	ic sīe/bēo	<i>1pl</i>	wē sīen/bēon
<i>2sg</i>	þū eart/bist	<i>2pl</i>	gē sindon/bēoþ	<i>2sg</i>	þū sīe/bēo	<i>2pl</i>	gē sīen/bēon
<i>3sg</i>	hē is/biþ	<i>3pl</i>	hīe sindon/bēoþ	<i>3sg</i>	hē sīe/bēo	<i>3pl</i>	hīe sīen/bēon
<i>preterite indicative</i>				<i>preterite subjunctive</i>			
<i>1sg</i>	ic wæs	<i>1pl</i>	wē wāron	<i>1sg</i>	ic wāre	<i>1pl</i>	wē wāren
<i>2sg</i>	þū wāre	<i>2pl</i>	gē wāron	<i>2sg</i>	þū wāre	<i>2pl</i>	gē wāren
<i>3sg</i>	hē wæs	<i>3pl</i>	hīe wāron	<i>3sg</i>	hē wāre	<i>3pl</i>	hīe wāren
<i>past participle</i>	(gebēon)	<i>imperative sg</i>		wes/bēo	<i>pl</i>	wesaþ/bēoþ	